Presbyterian Home Missions Among the Mexicans

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PRESBYTERIAN HOME MISSIONS AMONG THE MEXICANS.

NEW MEXICO is essentially a foreign country. By race, by religion, by language and by tradition its people are separated from those of other parts of our common country. Evangelistic work in this Territory is therefore compassed by nearly all the difficulties incident to both home and foreign missionary effort, while, on the other hand, the results of this work are such as both the home missionary and the foreign reap from their labor.

THE HISTORY

of no part of our land is so full of interest and romance as that of New Mexico. Within its territory was the cradle of the race over which the Montezumas were kings. Upon its mountains and valleys temples and altars were reared centuries before Cortez dreamed of his conquests. Ruins of cities, of palaces and of temples are yet seen which mark the perfection of the civilization of the native races of the Western continent. This civilization compares not unfavorably with that of the primitive people of the Old World. Its military system was perfect. Schools were established. A literature was preserved by means of hieroglyphics.

THE INVADING SPANIARD

found an industrious, peaceable and religious people. Whether the desolation and devastation wrought by the conqueror found compensation in the knowledge of higher arts and purer faith which he introduced, may well be doubted. In New Mexico, as in Mexico, the aborigines amalgamated with the Spaniard and produced a new type, the Mexican. As a part of Mexico, New Mexico differed in hardly a point from the parent country, from which it is divided by no natural boundary. For three hundred years its people advanced neither in science nor arts, in politics, education nor religion. The first of the territory of the United States to be settled by Europeans, it was yet the most backward in receiving the ideas of European civilization. When Gen. Kearney raised the United States flag at Santa Fé, in June, 1846, but one school existed in what is now the Territory of New Mexico. A small proportion of the inhabitants could read. The implements of agriculture and manufacture were of the rudest construction, hardly superior to those of their primitive forefathers. The mines which the early Spanish conquerors had worked, and from which they had carried away abundant treasure, were idle, and the very location of many of them was forgotten.

of the region were little understood at first by the Americans. The fever for gold bore men to California; the silver mines of Nevada attracted Eastern enterprise, and the plains of Colorado proved broad enough for all the flocks and herds which the gold and silver could buy. Cut off from direct communication either by rail or boat with the best of the country, New Mexico remained, for the first quarter of a century after the American occupancy, as essentially foreign as it was found. Its valleys remained uncultivated; its mines remained unworked.

THE TIDE OF EMIGRATION

has already set towards the Territory. In 1880 the American population of New Mexico was not far from 9,000, or about one-thirteenth of the population, while the entire population, including Mexicans and Pueblo Indians, numbered 119,565. The census for 1890 showed a very decided increase in the inhabitants of New Mexico, the population, as then reported, numbering 153,593, making an increase in this Territory of over 28 per cent. The estimated population in 1895 was 175,600, and the number of school children about 50,000. The total number of Mexicans in the United States is estimated at 850,000, these Spanish-speaking people making a large element in the populations of Colorado, Arizona, California and Texas.

THE POPULATION OF NEW MEXICO

consists of four distinct and, in some respects, antagonistic classes of persons:

First, the Pueblo Indians.

They are the remnant of the native race, of whose history and antecedents we know almost nothing. They are scattered in seventeen different Pueblo towns and live in those remarkable communal houses so closely associated with their name. The inhabitants of each of these towns are distinct from those of the others, and, while possessing a common language in the Spanish, speak among themselves twelve or fifteen different dialects. They are partially civilized and are self-supporting, having many of the arts of civilized society. While their religion is nominally Roman Catholic, it is in reality Pagan. Certain of the rites and ceremonies of that church have been grafted upon the ancient aboriginal faith. They worship the sun; they worship their ancestors in the forms of snakes, and many of them look forward to the return of Montezuma. Yet among the larger part of the Pueblos certain popish rites are observed. The name of Jesus is to them a magic charm, which they repeat and re-repeat in time of danger. Of them Humboldt says, "I have seen them, masked and adorned with tinkling bells, perform a savage dance around the altar, while a monk of St. Francis elevated the host." Every year they hunt snakes in the mountains, and after catching large numbers, in the *estufas* perform the dance of worship in honor of their ancestors, of whose souls the snakes are supposed to be possessed.

Second, the roving Indians.

These Indians are interlopers, and have doubtless drifted down from the North since the conquest. They have nothing in common with the Pueblos. Their number cannot be exactly ascertained, and is variously estimated from 10,000 to 30,000.

Savage and bloodthirsty, they have been a constant menace to the foreign population until the last few years.

Third, the native Mexican population.

The Mexican is of a mixed race. In his veins flows the mingled blood of the Montezumas and the Spaniard. While some are of an almost pure Castilian type, still others approach almost as nearly to the pure Indian blood. They speak a language foreign to our country; they preserve their foreign customs and traditions; they pay allegiance to a religion which, as taught and practiced, is opposed to the spirit of our age and government. Every grade of moral and intellectual development is found among them, from the courteous gentleman of the cavalier type, to the lowest specimens of squalid and wretched human life. As a class they are densely ignorant. But very few Mexian women can read or write, and five-sixths of the children are growing up without facilities for even an elementary education. The *Penitentes*, whose self-imposed tortures and lacerations rival those of the Hindu devotees, belong to the lowest order of the native Mexican population. Although nominally Roman Catholic, they are not recognized by the church. Over this native population Jesuitical influence and Jesuitical ideas possess as great power as in any part of the globe. It must not be forgotten that both the Mexican and Pueblo Indians are American citizens, with full rights, privileges and responsibilities.

Fourth, the American population.

The American in New Mexico is not, as might at first thought seem, a mere adventurer. The affairs of government have called men of ability and character to the Territory for their administration. The settlement of land claims has induced lawyers to make homes here. The development of the railroad interest has brought together engineers and capitalists, while the healthfulness of the climate has attracted invalids from many parts of the country. The opening of the railroad, which has made the Territory accessible, has already stimulated an influx of population. Wherever the American has gone, he has carried with him the American idea; schools have been established, and churches built. But as yet his influence has been local.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES.

When the Territory was annexed to the United States, in 1846, it possessed almost no educational facilities. Up to 1872, no effort was made to establish public schools. At that time certain school laws were passed, and some schools established; under the law, however, much of the public money passed into the hands of the Jesuits. The Commissioner of Education reported, in 1889, 344 public schools in the Territory, 143 of which were taught in English, 95 in English and Spanish, and 106 in Spanish. Many of these schools, there is reason to believe, were hardly more than farces, in some cases the teachers being able neither to read nor write. The money was largely given into the hands of the priests, and used to further the interests of the church.

But the pressure of American ideas has compelled the Roman Catholics to take some forward steps in education. Since 1870, they have established several schools of high grade in the principal cities of the Territory.

PIONEER EFFORT.

Among Protestant denominations the pioneer missionary was a Baptist—Rev. W. H. Read—who was at Santa Fé in 1849. A Presbyterian minister was close behind, however, Rev. W. G. Kephart being sent out by the American Missionary Society in 1850. At that time the small settlement of Council Grove, Kansas, was the only white settlement besides the military posts between the Missouri line and Santa Fé, a distance of over 1,000 miles. The ox train with which he journeyed was three months making the trip. The first Protestant church and school work had many vicissitudes, and the Baptist mission was finally abandoned and left to the Presbyterians. Mr. Kephart's successor was Rev. D. F. McFarland, who in 1866 established a Presbyterian church, and the school at Santa Fé, which has been such a power in the Territory in the education of Mexican girls. The story of this mission school and its steady development under the care of Miss M. L. Allison may be learned from the leaflet, "Santa Fé Boarding School," published by the Woman's Board of Home Missions.

EARLY CONVERTS.

In the early fifties, while the Baptists were still at Santa Fé, the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of one Mexican, who afterward became the first convert in the Taos Valley and a Presbyterian evangelist of many years' standing. The writer has heard from his own lips, in his home at Ranchos de Taos, amid his mediæval surroundings, the story of his conversion. He is the venerable J. D. Mondragon, and in 1856 was Chief Brother or Captain of the Penitentes of the Taos Valley and a member of the Legislature at Santa Fé. He wandered into the Baptist mission there, and heard the Rev. Mr. Gorman preach. Before he left the capital for his home at Taos he obtained a Bible, but had no more Christian instruction until seventeen years afterwards, when the Presbyterian missionary, Rev. James M. Roberts, settled at Taos. In the meantime he had gained enough from his Bible, unguided by man, to renounce the dreadful rites of the Penitentes, but as he quaintly expressed it, "I was nothing." Now, as an old man of seventy-seven, he looks back on many years' faithful work as a Christian evangelist among his countrymen after Presbyterian training had fitted him for such a useful life.

Rev. Jose Y. Perea, the first Mexican convert ordained to the full work of the ministry, has had an eventful history. His father's family was the richest and most aristocratic in New Mexico. At an early age he was sent East to school, where he imbibed Protestant views. Upon returning home for vacation he signalized his Protestantism by breaking the images in his father's house, for which he received a sound whipping. Upon the close of his school life he had become so pronounced a Protestant that he was not allowed to return to New Mexico, and became an exile and wanderer for sixteen years. During this time he visited the principal seaports of Europe and Asia, and resided for a time in California. After he was allowed to return to New Mexico he was for several years a shepherd, with but little companionship except his Bible and God. It was thus he was found waiting by the first Presbyterian missionaries that went to New Mexico. For several years he did a good work as licentiate evangelist, and was then advanced to the full work of the ministry, the first among the Mexicans of New Mexico.

Presbyterian work in New Mexico has also identified with it several descendants of the mountain patriarch, Father Gomez. The ancestors of Father Gomez came from Spain with the early conquerors of the country, bringing much of the clan spirit of the Moors, and according to patriarchal custom he was the recognized head and chief of the family, three or four generations calling him father. For 300 years the clan lived in this land, bound with the superstitions of the Church of Rome.

Through some unknown providence he saw for the first time a Spanish Bible. Its truths were a wonder to him, and although poor he could not be satisfied until he should possess this wondrous book. As none could be procured near his home, he started for Santa Fé to make the purchase, a distance of 150 miles. He borrowed a yoke of oxen and took one ox to sell, which he disposed of for $25, and purchased his Bible. With joy he read and accepted its precious words of life, then gathered his friends about him to hear of the wonderful love of God. Comparing the teachings of Scripture with the doctrines of the Church of Rome, and becoming convinced that they were at variance with them, he withdrew from its communion, although the existence of the Protestant Church was unknown to him.

When a missionary of the Presbyterian Board visited the region he was welcomed by this company of Bible Christians and a church was soon organized. In addition to a church a school was established, of which the grandson of this patriarch became the teacher.

During the meeting of the General Assembly in New York, 1889, there stood before the Woman's Board of Home Missions a young man, Mr. Manuel Sanchez, the grandson of Father Gomez, who held in his hands that treasured Bible, which had lost its covers from long use. With much feeling he related the above story, stating that that Bible had been the source of light and unspeakable blessing to many. In conclusion he exclaimed, "I bless and praise God for the precious gift, and I would not part with it for all the world beside."

A son of the famous Father Martinez, well known in New Mexican history, is the Presbyterian evangelist, V. F. Romero, of El Prado de Taos, and the story of many another, now preaching in his native Spanish the unsearchable riches of Christ, would add to the notable record of Presbyterian mission work in New Mexico.

MISSION STATIONS.

In 1869 Rev. J. G. Annin began the work at Las Vegas, opening school in 1870 under the auspices of the Ladies' Board of Missions of New York, who were organized and began the work in New Mexico—beginning with the Santa Fé Mission in 1866—before the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions came into being. A church building was erected and the day school continued until 1886, when it was made a boarding school in order to do the work its situation and surroundings demanded. The school work here, as elsewhere in New Mexico, had been transferred to the Woman's Executive Committee of Home Missions (now Woman's Board) after the organization of that body in 1878. The Las Vegas school prospered and outgrew its quarters, until the Board deemed it wise to transfer the boarding department to Albuquerque, where available buildings, owned by the

Board, could be utilized if the school were made distinctively a boys' school. Further particulars may be obtained from the leaflet, "Albuquerque School for Mexican Boys," published by the Woman's Board.

Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the pioneer organizer of churches and mission schools and Superintendent of Presbyterian Missions, went through the Rocky Mountain territories as early as 1869. Much of the first missionary effort was directed toward the Pueblo Indians in the Territory; thus Rev. Mr. Roberts, at Taos (1872), began first with those people and afterward gathered in their Mexican neighbors.

So in 1876 the mission at Laguna Pueblo was established by Dr. Jackson and Rev. John Menaul, and in 1877 Dr. H. K. Palmer began the Zuni Mission; in 1878 Dr. J. M. Shields opened the Jemez Mission, and in 1881 Prof. Shearer assumed charge of the Albuquerque Mission—all for these Pueblo Indians.

The results in the Taos Valley are best illustrated in the three prosperous schools—bright lights in that community of Penitentes—at Ranchos de Taos, Fernandez de Taos and El Prado de Taos, taught for so many years by Miss Alice Hyson, Miss Rebecca Rowland and Miss Elizabeth Craig, respectively; besides the little plaza schools taught by native evangelists at Arroyo Hondo and Arroyo Seco.

In 1875 a school was started at El Rito for Mexicans, and in 1878 the mission at Ocate was begun by Rev. R. W. Hall and wife, by whose labors a wonderful revolution in the life of that community has taken place. In the Congress of Missions at the Chicago Exposition Mrs. Darwin R. James, president of the Woman's Board, made this statement concerning the Ocate Mission, which may be quoted as typical of the results of Presbyterian endeavor in New Mexico:

"As an illustration of the change possible in a community through the mission schools alone, accompany me to a hamlet in New Mexico. Fourteen years ago indolence, superstition and vice reigned. Though in a dairy country, they knew nothing of the use of milk; plowing the ground with a crooked stick, their other methods of agriculture were in unison; houses and clothing were alike wretched. Go there to-day: the farms are well tilled, American implements of agriculture are used, houses are greatly improved, the people are well clad, milk, butter and fruit are seen upon their tables. But stay until Sunday comes. Who are those respectable looking people on their way to church? Fathers and mothers with their children, undivided families, going together to the house of God. What has brought about this change? The mission school; in this instance taught by a man and his wife who have transformed a region twelve miles in diameter. They have taught the men how to cultivate their land and care for their cattle; the women how to keep house, prepare their food, make the clothing for the family and take care of the children; besides this, they have trained one colporter, six native evangelists, four elders, two deacons, four Sabbath-school superintendents, ten Sabbath-school teachers, two public school and four mission school teachers, and the influence of the mission has gone into all the country round about."

In 1879 the Home Board reported eleven Mexican and three Pueblo schools. That was the year when Corrales Mission School opened with Mrs. J. Y. Perea as teacher, followed by Socorro Mission in 1880, under Rev. S. D. Fulton.

In 1881 the Mora School was begun, under Rev. Maxwell Phillips, which afterwards developed into a boarding school. It was discontinued in 1892 and reopened as a day school in 1894.

The schools at Glorietta and Jemez Hot Springs also began.

In 1883 a day school was established in Aqua Negra.

The Spanish school at Los Angeles was opened in 1883 and has had a fine record as a boarding school for Mexicans in California.

The same year saw the beginnings of La Costilla, of Los Lentes, and of Las Cruces, where Mrs. and Miss Granger have labored so successfully.

Pajarito school was opened in 1884, and in 1885 Penasco Mission, where Miss S. M. Zuver has had an eventful experience in her devoted work there.

In 1887 the school at Raton was opened, and has since flourished under the faithful service of Miss Delia M. Hills, and the same year the school at Embudo was started, where Miss Kate Kennedy still labors. Chaperito, Buena Vista, Aqua de Lobo, Tecolote, Pena Blanca (afterwards transferred to Las Placitas), and Rio Pueblo, all plaza day schools, were successively opened and most of them still continue.

Besides these stations in New Mexico others in Southern Colorado may be added, like San Luis, established as a day school in 1878, San Rafael in 1880, Antonito in 1884, Alamosa Cañon in 1888, San Pablo in 1889, La Florida in 1892, San Juan in 1895; while the College at Del Norte has a record of its own.

This chronological survey does not cover the whole field of mission school work among the Mexicans, but touches the most important points where the work has been continuous. Sixteen Presbyterian churches in New Mexico and five in Colorado have been the direct outgrowth of the mission school work under the care of the Woman's Board. Over the whole field that tireless missionary, Rev. James A. Menaul, traveled and labored as Synodical Missionary and Superintendent, guiding and encouraging preacher and teacher, preaching and comforting, year after year, until his Lord called him home in the spring of 1897. His successor, Rev. R. M. Craig, finds a wide field of great promise but of hard conditions.

In 1868, when the Presbytery of Santa Fé was organized, it consisted of three ministers and one elder, but it comprised all the ministers within the Territory of New Mexico, except one or two Episcopal clergymen who were the chaplains in the United States Army, and the only organized Protestant church was that of Santa Fé, where the school work was already begun. The Synod of New Mexico now covers 55 churches, with 27 ordained ministers and 16 local evangelists. The schools for Mexicans under the Woman's Board number 24. God has prospered the work, but still the cry is for more light, more schools, more missionaries.

The call which the deplorable condition of this portion of our common country makes upon Christian men and women is urgent. The opportunities for the work of Christian education are practically unlimited. A Mexican was recently asked if the priests would not oppose the public schools. His reply was, "Yes; but what of it? The world is moving, and we must move." The people are awakening out of their long sleep, and must have light. The question for the Church to answer is, whether New Mexico is to have a material or a Christian civilization.

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